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The gender system of Anii

https://doi.org/10.1515/stuf-2021-1037

Abstract: The present paper describes the gender system of Anii, a Na-Togo language spoken in Benin and Togo. Anii has a full-fledged and productive gender system that consists of 10 agreement classes. It also provides 10 nominal form classes that are not fully identical with the agreement classes. The assignment of gender follows largely morphological criteria, but the prevalent principle for the current classification system is the division of nouns along the animacy hierarchy.

Keywords: animacy; deriflection; gender; Na-Togo

1 Introduction

Anii (Bassila, Ouinji–Ouinji) is a Ghana-Togo-Mountain language of the Niger-Congo language family. It is spoken by approximately 50,000 speakers along the Benin-Togo border in the Donga district of Benin and the Tchamba prefecture of Togo (Eberhard et al. 2019). Heine (1968b) classifies Anii together with Adele within the Na-Togo branch of this language group. There seem to be four dialectal groups (Tompkins and Kluge 2009) which diverge from one another considerably. While the language as a whole is only scarcely documented, the variety spoken in Bassila is the most thoroughly described one and has been used as the reference dialect for language standardization. It is the basis for the present study.

Research and language development activities undertaken with Anii language communities in recent decades have resulted in a number of publications (Fiedler 2011, 2018; Morton 2012, 2014, 2018; Zaske 2007, Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014).[1] However, none of these are especially dedicated to nominal classification. The language was first addressed in a small study by Bertho (1951) and has two short dictionaries (Elwert 1993; Zaske and Zaske 2013). The first in-depth study of the

1 The latter two publications come from a SIL team based in Bassila who promote language development (cf. https://www.gasana.org).

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nominal classification system in Anii was undertaken by Heine (1968a), who also compared it with that of other Ghana–Togo-Mountain languages (Heine 1968b). A short description of the "noun class system" in Anii is also given by Elwert (1974). Zaske and Atti Kalam (2014) provide an overview of the nominal classification system that unambiguously combines nominal form classes, i.e. the morphological marking on the noun itself, and morphosyntactic agreement classes, similar to the approach followed here.

The main typological characteristics of Anii are as follows: Anii is a tone language with two tonemes (high, low) and tonal downstep[2] (Morton 2014). As with many other Kwa languages, the language exhibits a vowel harmony of the ATR type based on an 11-vowel system (Morton 2012, 2014). The basic word order in Anii is subject–verb–object and the language is head-initial in noun and verb phrases.

The data used in this paper comes from a variety of sources. The basis of the description is an 80-word wordlist that has been compiled by Stefanie Zaske and her team (in the following: Zaske, p.c.). Zaske also provided revisions and comments on my initial analysis and additional material. Data illustrating agreement patterns are sourced primarily from my own fieldwork conducted in Bassila in 2008. This is supplemented by published sources and duly indicated. To this end, it should be noted that while I deem Heine (1968a) and Elwert (1993) to be valuable sources, the data in both diverge from the language variety described by Zaske. For this reason, I have opted to rely on more recent data for the sake of consistency. Data provided by Zaske is transcribed using the Anii orthography which, although it has its merits, nevertheless blurs the ATR distinction for vowels appearing in the nominal prefixes (Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014: 20). Therefore, for the sake of transparency, the transcriptions have been adapted to reflect this important phonological property.

The present description of the Anii nominal classification system follows the novel methodological framework outlined in Güldemann and Fiedler (2019, this volume). In contrast to the traditional "noun class" approach, morphological marking on the noun is treated separately from the morphosyntactic behavior of nouns (Sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2, respectively). These two categories are described first separately and thereafter related one to the other. Section 2.2 discusses the systemic relations between nominal form classes (Section 2.2.1) and agreement classes (Section 2.2.2). This establishes two systems, namely the deriflection and the gender system, which are compared and contrasted (Section 2.2.3). Some concluding remarks are given in Section 3.

2 Tone marking in this paper follows the conventions used in the sources.

2 Description

2.1 The morphosyntax of noun forms

2.1.1 Nominal form (NF) classes

2.1.1.1 Inflectional morphology

Anii has a system of 10 nominal form classes (NF) represented by the combination of a nominal root with a gender-number prefix as exponent of the nominal form class (cf. Table 1). The nominal prefixes have the structure CV-, V- or N- and bear an underlying low tone (Heine 1968a: 5; Morton 2014: 267). Besides these mostly canonical cases, there are some nouns without prefix, mostly loan words and proper names.

The quality of the prefix vowel depends on the ATR feature of the vowel of the immediately following root. In a compound, when two nominal roots bearing

Table 1: Nominal form classes of Anii.

NF	Allomorphs	Number	Examples
Ø-		SG	*kɛkɛ* 'bicycle', *təmatɪ* 'tomato'
		TN	*iḍiriisu* 'Idrissou', *ɔmɔɔɔḍɛ* 'Omode'
U-	*u-, ʊ-*	SG	*u-səmprə* 'woman'; *u-ce* 'goat', *ʊ-ḍɔ* 'neck', *u-lələmə* 'root'
		TN	*u-to* 'rain', *u-shilè* 'sun', *ʊ-pɪʊ* 'coming'
BA-	*bə-, ba-*	PL	*bə-səmprə* 'women', *bə-yifala* 'young persons'
A-	*ə-, a-*	SG	*ə-yifala* 'young person', *a-cɪrɪ* 'chicken', *ə-kùtú* 'orange'
		PL	*a-ɓ* 'ears', *ə-ko* 'livers', *ə-tó* 'waters', *a-pà* 'palm nuts', *a-tala* 'stones'
		TN	*a-tʊŋa* 'ash'
I-	*i-, ɪ-*	PL	*ɪ-cɪrɪ* 'chicken', *ɪ-kɛkɛ* 'bicycles', *i-kùtú* 'oranges'; *ɪ-sanà* 'feathers', *ɪ-ḍɔ* 'necks'; *ɪ-kəwa* 'bones', *i-nyine* 'eyes'
		TN	*ɪ-yɔ* 'smoke'
N-	*n-, ŋ-, m-*	SG	*ŋ-kəwa* 'bone', *ŋ-ko* 'liver'; *m-pà* 'palm nut', *n-tala* 'stone'
		TN	*ŋ-fárá* 'weakness'
GI-	*gi-, gɪ-*	SG	*gi-nyine* 'eye', *gɪ-sanà* 'feather', *gi-yupi* 'fruit'
		TN	*gɪ-yifala* 'youth', *gɪ-laaribuja* 'Arabic'
GU-	*gu-, gʊ-*	SG	*gʊ-ɓ* 'ear', *gu-yo* 'tree'; *gʊ-na* 'mother', *gʊ-yarɪ* 'chief'
		TN	*gu-soro* 'friendship'
GA-	*gə-, ga-*	SG	*ga-nɔ* 'mouth', *gə-lei* 'word, problem', *gə-cipí* 'small drum'
		TN	*ga-laaributəna* 'Arabia'
BU-	*bu-, bʊ-*	SG	*bu-to* 'water'
		TN	*bù-cè* 'death', *bʊ-tʊŋa* 'salt'
		PL	*bʊ-nɔ* 'mouths', *bu-lei* 'words, speech', *bu-cipí* 'small drums'

vowels with different ATR values come together, the prefix vowel harmonizes with that of the adjacent root (Morton 2012: 74), and not with that of the head noun.

(1)	[−ATR] root		[+ATR] root		[−ATR][+ATR] stem	
	m-pá	+	*u-pi*	>	*ʊ-pá.pi*	
	N-village		U-child		U-village-child	‘native’

Most prefixes convey a specific number value but can also occur on transnumeral nouns, i.e. nouns that are insensitive to number (TN, cf. Biermann 1982: 229; Iturrioz-Leza and Skopeteas 2004: 1054). Only NF *BA-* is exclusively dedicated to plural human nouns. The NF *BU-* is particularly complex in its number behavior. The apparent core number feature is transnumeral for abstract, mass and liquid nouns. However, many of these nouns can become singular due to a possible plural counterpart in NF *A-* conveying ‘kinds of’. Finally, *BU-* is the regular plural form for nouns of NF *GA-*.

2.1.1.2 Derivational morphology

Certain nominal form classes have well-defined semantic cores (cf. Figure 4). This property is also reflected in derivational morphology. As it is not always possible to differentiate between deverbal and denominal derivation, the following description is structured according to the semantics of the derived noun.

Nearly all derived human nouns belong to NF classes *BA-* in plural and *A-* in singular, but never NF class *U-*, as could also have been expected. Often, certain suffixes like *-ka* and *-ja* are involved that presumably were nominal roots.

(2)	*a-jɪ-ka/ba-jɪ-ka*	< *jɪ* ‘to eat’	‘eater’	
	a-yɛɛ-ja/ba-yɛɛ-ja	< *yɛɛ* ‘look for’	‘hunter’	
	a-fələnɖɪ-ja/ba-fələnɖɪ-ja		‘Fula person’	[Zaske, p.c.]

Language names derived from places/ethnic groups belong to NF class *GI-*, parallel to the general term *gɪ-krə/ɪ-krə* ‘language’. Interestingly, languages derived from place names of Anii origin do not need suffix *-ja*.

(3)	*gɪ-laaribu-ja*	‘Arabic language’	[Zaske, p.c.]
	gi-síɖa	‘dialect of Bassila’	[Heine 1968b: 23]

Deverbal action nominalizations are formed by a shift into NF class *U-* and suffixing *-u* to the verb root. Some verbal nouns derived this way have a plural form, as in (4a). Deverbal object nominalizations are formed either by a shift into NF classes *GU-* or *BU-* and express the process or the result of an action, respectively (see (4b) and (4c)). Both form plurals with NF class *A-*.

(4)	a.	*ʊ-jɪ-ʊ/ɪ-jɪ-ʊ*	< *jɪ* ‘to eat’	‘eating, food’	
	b.	*gʊ-ŋʊmbɔ/a-nʊmbɔ*	< *ŋʊm* ‘to give birth’	‘act of birth’	[Elwert 1993]
	c.	*bʊ-cəma/a-cəma*	< *cəm* ‘be beautiful’	‘beauty’	[Elwert 1993]

Instruments are derived from verbs by NF *GI-* and the suffix *-ka* occurring on some agentive nouns, with a plural in NF *I-*.

(5) *gɪ-nɔŋ-ka/ɪ-nɔŋ-ka* 'pencil' < *nɔŋ* 'write'
[Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014: 42]

NF classes *GI-* and *GU-* also host several abstract nouns that are derived from verbs or nouns. *GI-* marked derivations seem to infer a certain period in one's life.

(6) a. *gì-ká* cf. *a-ka/ba-ka* 'wife' 'state of married woman'
gi-minisr cf. ministre (French) 'position of minister'
b. *gu-soro* cf. *u-soro/bə-soro* 'friend' 'friendship'
gʊ-faŋa < *faŋa* 'to think' 'thinking' [Zaske, p.c.]

Diminutives are distributed across different NF classes and are typically formed with the diminutive suffix *-pi* (sometimes shortened to *-i*), which can itself occur in various NF classes, as shown in (7). Diminutives in NF classes *GA-* (SG) and *BU-* (PL) express descendants of animals (8a), some disabled persons (8b), and objects (8c). Diminutives of NF classes *GI-* (SG) and *I-* (PL) express 'small' things occurring in masses ('stars') or being the offspring/part of some other thing (example (9)). Overall, diminutive formations result from the interplay of *-pi* and the specific NF class (cf. also Di Garbo and Agbetsoamedo 2018 on the Na-Togo language Sɛlɛɛ).

(7) *u-pi/bə-pi* 'human child'
gə-pi/bu-pi 'animal child'/'very small (human) child'[3]
gi-pi/i-pi 'seed' ('plant child') [Zaske, p.c.]

(8) a. *ga-na-pi/bʊ-na-pi* 'calf' < *a-na/ɪ-na* 'cow'
b. *gà-pílí/bʊ́-pílí* 'old person' cf. *gɪ-pəla* 'old age' [Elwert 1993: 24]
c. *gə-ci-pí/bu-ci-pí* 'small drum' < *n-cé/ə-cé* 'drum' [Zaske, p.c.]

(9) *gɪ-yu-pi/ɪ-yu-pi* 'fruit' < *gʊ-yo/a-yo* 'tree' [Zaske, p.c.]

2.1.2 Agreement and agreement (AGR) classes

Anii also has an elaborate system of 10 agreement classes (cf. Table 2). Agreement targets are pronominal forms (subject, object, demonstrative, relative), as well as the adjective, numerals, determiner and even an identifier, which is used as focus particle as well (cf. Fiedler 2018). Most of the agreement (hence AGR) classes are not only dedicated to a single number value; they may additionally refer to transnumeral

3 The second translation was given by Elwert (1993).

nouns not specified for number. AGR classes 2 and 3 differ only in the form of one single agreement target, the focus/identifying particle. They are treated here separately and not as subclasses of one unique AGR class, as this differentiation goes hand in hand with a semantic specification. AGR class 2, *ba~pɪ*, is restricted to human referents, whereas AGR class 3, *ba~nɪ*, contains plural nouns referring to animals and borrowings, both having NF *I-* (Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014, cf. (9) and (18)).

An overview of the agreement system is given in Table 2, followed by some selected examples for all agreement targets.

All modifiers follow the head noun, as shown with numeral 'two' (10), the indefinite determiner (11, 12) and the adjective 'old' (13). In case of vocalic agreement exponents, these are often elided yielding to non-agreeing targets (cf. (10)–(11), (14c)). For agreement prefixes of CV shape, though, no elision can be observed. All modifiers can be used without head noun, too (cf. example (12)). Some of the examples of apparent adjectives suggest that these have strong nominal characteristics, allowing their occurrence with nominal forms, like NF *U-* and *BA-* in combination with the adjective 'old', for reference to persons having that property, or NF *GI-* with the same adjective for expression of an abstract noun meaning 'seniority' (example (13)).

(10)
bə́-rɛ̀	***bà****-nyìʊ́*	'two people'	AGR2
ì-lɔ́ɔ́rì	***bà****-nyìʊ́*	'two cars'	AGR3
ì-síkìrípí	***(ì-)****nyìʊ́*	'two pieces of sugar'	AGR5
à-kpálá	***(ì-)****nyìʊ́*	'two times'	AGR5

(11)
ù-ŋónó	***(ə̀-)****ɖə́ŋ*	'an old person'	AGR1
u-fətərə	***ù****-dáŋ*	'a smell'	AGR4
gì-yìpí	***gì****-ɖə́ŋ*	'a fruit'	AGR7

(12)
ì-yìpí	*ɖə́ŋ*	*ɖé*	*tí*	*fə̂ɖá*					
I.5-fruit	5:IDEF	?DEM	IPFV	fall					
ná	*ká*	***gì-ɖə́ŋ***	*gì*	*fə̂ɖá*	*án-ɖì*		*láŋ*	*à*	*pí*
and	GEN	7-IDEF	7	fall	1:POSS-head		on	PRO	break

'Some fruits were falling (from the tree), and one (of them) fell on his head and broke.' [Fiedler, field notes]

(13)
gà-fàlá	***gà****-ŋónō*	'old house'	AGR9
ù-ŋōnó/bà-ŋónó		'old person'	NF *U-/BA-*
gi-ŋónó		'seniority, patronage' [Elwert 1993][4]	NF *GI-*

4 Given there as *gi-ŋɔnɔ*.

Table 2: Agreement classes of Anii (after Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014).

AGR	Exponent	SBJ	OBJ	FOC/ID	ADJ/which	NUM	IDEF	DEM.DIST	DEM.PROX	REL	PRO EMPH_1	PRO EMPH_2	Number	Default NF	Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014*
1	*a-*	*a*	*nɪ*	*na*	*a-*	*ʊ-/a-*	*(ʊ)-ɖən*	*Ø-ɖe*	*n-Ø-ɖe*	*n-Ø-ɖee*	*a-ɖe*	*ʊ-nɪ*	SG, TN	*U-, A-, Ø*	A, Ǝ, B
2	*ba-~ pɪ*	*ba*	*pɪ*	*pɪ*	*ba-*	*ba-*	*ba-ɖən*	*ba-ɖe*	*m-ba-ɖe*	*m-ba-ɖee*	*ba-ɖe*	*ba-nɪ*	PL	*BA-*	Y
3	*ba-~ nɪ*	*ba*	*pɪ*	*nɪ*	*ba-*	*ba-*	*ba-ɖən*	*ba-ɖe*	*m-ba-ɖe*	*m-ba-ɖee*	*ba-ɖe*	*ba-nɪ*	PL	*I-*	W
4	*ʊ-*	*ʊ*	*ʊ*	*na*	*ʊ-*	*ʊ-*	*ʊ-ɖən*	*Ø-ɖe*	*n-Ø-ɖe*	*n-Ø-ɖee*	*ʊ-ɖe*	*ʊ-nɪ*	SG, TN	*U-*	E
5	*ɪ-*	*ɪ*	*ɪ*	*nɪ*	*ɪ-*	*ɪ-*	*ɪ-ɖən*	*Ø-ɖe*	*n-Ø-ɖe*	*n-Ø-ɖee*	*ɪ-ɖe*	*ɪ-nɪ*	PL, TN	*I-, A-*	U, T
6	*n-*	*n*	*njɪ*	*njɪ*	*n-*	*n-*	*n-ɖən*	*Ø-ɖe*	*n-Ø-ɖe*	*n-Ø-ɖee*	*n-ɖe*	*n-nɪ*	SG, TN	*N-*	F
7	*gɪ-*	*gɪ*	*jɪ*	*jɪ*	*gɪ-*	*gɪ-*	*gɪ-ɖən*	*gɪ-ɖe*	*ŋ-gɪ-ɖe*	*ŋ-gɪ-ɖee*	*gɪ-ɖe*	*gɪ-nɪ*	SG, TN	*GI-*	Ð
8	*gʊ-*	*gʊ*	*kʊ*	*kʊ*	*gʊ-*	*gʊ-*	*gʊ-ɖən*	*gʊ-ɖe*	*ŋ-gʊ-ɖe*	*ŋ-gʊ-ɖee*	*gʊ-ɖe*	*gʊ-nɪ*	SG, TN	*GU-*	Ɛ
9	*ga-*	*ga*	*jɪ*	*jɪ*	*ga-*	*ga-*	*ga-ɖən*	*ga-ɖe*	*ŋ-ga-ɖe*	*ŋ-ga-ɖee*	*ga-ɖe*	*ga-nɪ*	SG	*GA-*	C
10	*bʊ-*	*bʊ*	*bʊ*	*bʊ*	*bʊ-*	*bʊ-*	*bʊ-ɖən*	*bʊ-ɖe*	*m-bʊ-ɖe*	*m-bʊ-ɖee*	*bʊ-ɖe*	*bʊ-nɪ*	SG, TN, PL	*BU-*	G, Ʊ

*This column gives the naming conventions used in Zaske and Atti Kalam (2014). The upper case letters refer to the agreement class in combination to the respective nominal form class, thus U indicates the combination of AGR class 5 with NF class *I-*, whereas T the combination of AGR5 with NF *A-*.

Subject index agreement on the verb is obligatory whether the nominal subject overt or not. However, an AGR class 1 subject index can be omitted, as in (14a). When no head noun is available or one has to refer to whole clauses, agreement has nevertheless to be expressed; this is obtained by using AGR class 5 ((14c)) as a kind of 'neutral agreement' (= 'default agreement' in Corbett 2006). Object agreement is exemplified in (15).

(14) a. *ù-sóró* ***Ø*** *ɖùó* *gù-yó* *láŋ́* *ná* *yɛ̀* *à* *fəɖá.* AGR1
U-boy.1 (1:SBJ) come.out GU.9-tree on and want PRO fall
'The boy wants to fall from the tree.' [Fiedler, field notes]

b. *ʊ́-kɔ̀lʊ́nsʊ́* ***á*** *rì* *ù-ɖəŋ* *ù-kéi.* AGR1
U-crab.1/4 1:SBJ catch 1-IDEF U-foot
'A crab caught the foot of someone.' [Fiedler, field notes]

c. ***ì*** *sàn* *ná* *ù-pí* *jàlá* *ná* *yár* AGR5
5:SBJ be.sweet for U-child.1 1:small and 1: POSS:mother
'The small child and his mother were happy. (lit. It was sweet for the small child and his mother.)' [Fiedler, field notes]

(15) a. *(ì-tókō)* … *áái,* *Ǹ* *kpál* ***pī*** *ná* AGR3
(I-cloth.3) … no 1SG iron 3:OBJ FOC
{Did you wash the clothes} 'No, I ironed them.' [Fiedler, field notes]

b. *(ŋ̀-kú)* … *ná* *ǹ* *shɛ́r* ***ǹjī.*** AGR6
(N.6-room) … and 1SG sweep 6:OBJ
'(My mother told me to sweep the room), and I swept it.'
[Fiedler, field notes]

There is one set of relative pronouns that are quite complex: they start with a nasal before the agreement forms which are then followed by a demonstrative element. Like all other modifiers, relative clauses always follow the head noun, if present (16b), but may occur without overtly expressed one (16a).

(16) a. ***m-ba-ɖee*** *ba* *na* *shɛɖə* *ma,* … AGR2
N-2-REL 2:SBJ IPFV be_sick TP
'(the people) who are sick, …' [Fiedler, field notes]

b. *lí* *bù-kɔ́* ***ḿ-bù-ɖéé*** *bù* *léé* *mā!* AGR10
say BU.10-thing N-10-REL 10:SBJ do TP
'Say what happened!' [Fiedler, field notes]

Focus constructions in Anii comprise a number of different strategies (cf. Fiedler 2018). Object focus constructions are of interest here, as the object in sentence-initial position is followed by the agreeing focus/identifying particle.

(17) a. *áâì, Ø-cúkūtú **ná** ǹ nyə́m.* AGR1
no, Ø.1-millet_beer 1:FOC 1SG drink
{Did you take your medicine?} 'No, I drank MILLET BEER.'

b. *bʊ̀-kɔ̀ bú-ɖé **ní** gíŋ* AGR10
BU.10-thing 10-DEM 10:FOC such
'It is THIS THING.' [Fiedler, field notes]

2.1.3 Nominal form classes versus agreement classes

Figure 1 shows the link between NF and AGR classes, which is largely alliterative, i.e., the NF triggers an alliterative AGR class. For humans, agreement in the singular is mainly motivated by semantics (AGR class 1). An exception holds for kinship terms with NF class marker *GU-*, for which speakers vary between semantic and alliterate agreement (Zaske, p.c.). For animals, according to Zaske (p.c.), only animals of NF class *A-* in the singular trigger AGR class 1; those belonging to NF class *U-* trigger AGR class 4. In my own data, however, the word for 'crab' *ʊ̀-kʊ̀lʊ́nsʊ́* triggers AGR class 1 (cf. (14b)). Presumably, animate assignment overrides the formal assignment in this case. Borrowed lexemes take NF class *Ø* and trigger AGR class 1 by default.

In the plural, alliterative agreement occurs with NF class *BA-* (AGR2) and NF class *BU-* (AGR10). AGR class 5 (*ɪ-*) is triggered by two nominal form classes (*A-* and *I-*). This seems to reflect a shift of all plural nouns with NF class *A-* into that agreement class, leaving agreement 1 (*a-*) solely for singular nouns referring to animates. Not all

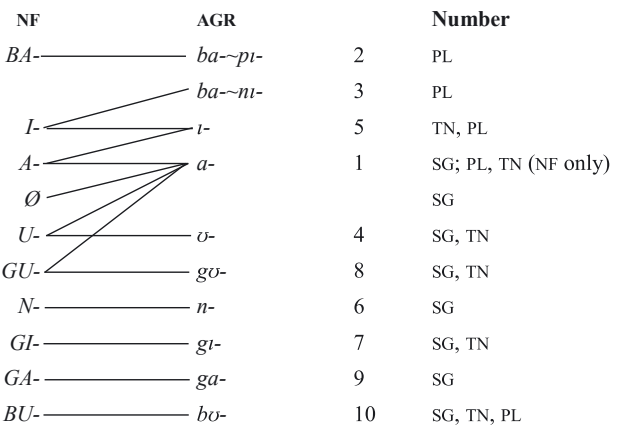


Figure 1: Relationship between nominal form classes and agreement classes in Anii (after Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014).

nouns with NF class *I-*, however, cause that agreement class; borrowings and animals with plural NF class *I-* exhibit agreement in AGR class 3. Conceivably, this distribution in plural reflects a basic semantic split between humans, animates and inanimates.

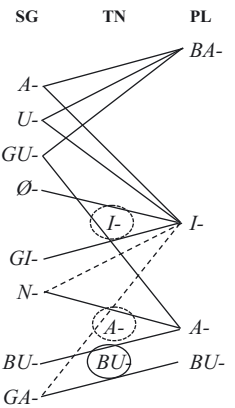
2.2 The behavior of nominal lexemes

2.2.1 Deriflection system

Anii exhibits a highly complex and crossed deriflection system. As shown in Figure 2, half of the singular class markers form pairs with more than one plural form and vice versa. This system captures all attested morphological paradigms: 13 paired deriflections, including two inquorate deriflections, and three single-class deriflections (of transnumeral nouns), of which two are inquorate.

Some deriflections clearly reflect semantic specifications: the pairings *U-/BA-*, *A-/BA-* and *GU-/BA-* are restricted to humans. Other deriflections are much more diverse with respect to semantics. For example, in addition to inanimates, the pairings *U-/I-* and *A-/I-* contain many animals, and *A-/I-* also contains many fruits.

Loan words beginning with a consonant are assigned to deriflection class *Ø/I-*, irrespective of their origin. Loan words starting with a vowel undergo vowel alternation in the plural, e.g. *albasa* / *ɪ-lbasa* 'onion' from Arabic (via Hausa or



(full deriflection: continuous line; inquorate deriflection: broken line; single deriflection: circle)

Figure 2: Deriflection system of Anii (after Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014).

Dendi). Here, the vowel of the Arabic article *al* seems to be reanalyzed as a prefix and alternates with *i-*. A similar pattern can be seen in *ʊ-ga / ɪ-ga* 'chief', borrowed from a Gbe lect where an original vocalic prefix *o-* is likely. All proper names are deemed to belong to deriflection *Ø/I-*, even though one cannot derive a plural form of them.

The three single-class deriflections (cf. example (18)) are neither singularia nor pluralia tantum nouns, as it is impossible to group them uniformly into one paired deriflection, as is the case for transnumeral nouns of NF classes *U-* and *N-* that belong to *U-/I-* and *N-/A-*, respectively. Deriflections *I-* and *A-* only contain one noun each and are treated as inquorate here, following the definition in Corbett (1991: 170–175).

(18) *I-* *ɪ-yɔ́* 'smoke'
A- *a-tʊŋa* 'ashes'
BU- *bù-cè* 'death'

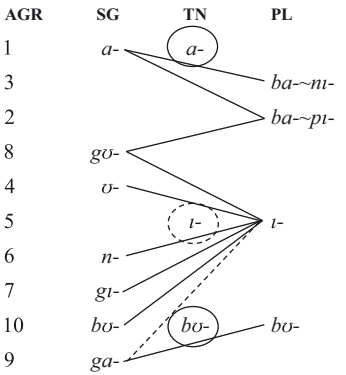
Elwert (1993: 2) reports significant variation in pronunciation and use of nominal prefixes among speakers of the Bassila dialect, as well as idiolectally, depending on the addressee. One such difference concerns the pairing of singular NF class *GA-*. In most cases, it pairs with *BU-*, but in my own data there is one example for deriflection *GA-/I-* (*ga-fala/ɪ-fala* 'house'). There are many further examples in Elwert (1993) that were produced by just one of his informants for which reason it is considered exceptional and therefore the deriflection *GA-/I-* is deemed inquorate. A similar case can be observed with deriflection *N-/I-*, (*ŋ-kəwa/i-kəwa* 'bone'). These exceptions might be a reflex of a general tendency to generalize NF class *I-* as plural for inanimates.

2.2.2 Gender system

The Anii gender system comprises 10 paired genders (including an inquorate one) and three single-class genders (Figure 3).

The following examples illustrate some of the inquorate genders as well as over-differentiated genders. Due to limited space, genders with regular and systematic rules have been left out (see Figure 4 for the numbering of genders).

A differentiation between gender I and gender II is not possible on the basis of the available data. Gender II featuring AGR eight for singular agreement is not borne out in my data but rather based on Zaske (p.c.) and Elwert (1974: 5). Gender III exists only because of the focus/identificational particle which itself differentiates AGR class 3 (18b) from AGR class 2, exemplified in (19a).



Note: AGR classes represented by AGR exponents

Figure 3: Gender system of Anii (after Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014).

(19) a. *bà-pì-gí* *bá-rīù* *pí* Gender I
BA.2-child-? 2-three 2:FOC
{Two young girls are reading.} 'It is THREE YOUNG GIRLS.'

b. *ì-tókō* ***nɪ́*** *ò* *fòɡá* *áà* Gender III
I-cloth.3 3:FOC 2SG wash Q
'Did you wash THE CLOTHES?' [Fiedler, field notes]

None of the other genders shows such a diversification and/or over-classification. Gender IV is well attested with inanimate nouns, however animals having NF *U-* in the singular and NF *I-* in the plural are to be expected (Zaske, p.c.). Based on the data at hand, such nouns are found in Gender III, which could be explained by anthropomorphism, but could also point to a more general differentiation between animate and inanimate nouns.

Speakers vary with respect to nouns exhibiting NF class *GA-* in the singular and either *BU-* or *I-* in the plural. This variation is also reflected in the alliterative agreement morphology. Example (19a) represents gender VIII showing agreement in AGR class 5, and not AGR class 10, the usual one (cf. (20b).

(20) a. *bɛ̀-rɛ̀* *tùtúúmà* *bɛ̀-fálá* *ì* *fə̀ɖá.* Gender VIII
BA.2-person many 2:POSS:I.5-house 5:SBJ fall
{There was a major flood in Cotonou.} 'The houses of many people collapsed.' [Fiedler, field notes]

b. *bʊ̀-fílí* *bʊ̀-jàlà* *bʊ̀* *fə̀ɖá* Gender X
BU.10-fish 10-small 10:SBJ fall
'The small fish (PL) fell.' [Morton 2014: 30]

Of the two single-class genders, XI (*bʊ-*) and XII (*ɪ-*), only the first one is attested in the data (example (21)). Gender XII has to be counted as inquorate, making it difficult to find examples, but is represented as neutral agreement as well (cf. example (14b)).

(21) *am-bu-ce* *bʊ* *tɪ* *səla*
1SG.POSS-BU.10-death 10:SBJ IPFV approach
{And the father has written: Now, I am old, and} 'my death approaches.'
[Zaske and Zaske 2008 (Baba)]

2.2.3 Deriflections versus genders

The gender system exhibits fewer pairings compared to the deriflection system. It is also less complex, with fewer crossed-pairs (cf. Figure 4). This is due on the one hand to the absence of an AGR class featuring class marker *a-* in the plural. This class conceivably merged with AGR class *ɪ-*, leading to the coincidence of two deriflections each into genders V and XII. Further, three different deriflections converge toward the human gender I (*a-/ba-~nɪ-)*.

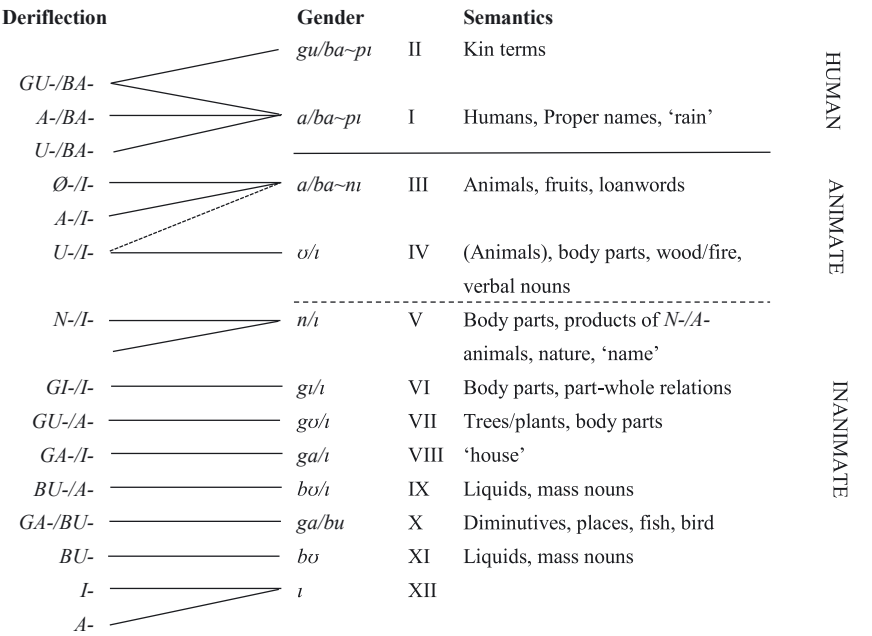


Figure 4: Relationship between deriflections and genders in Anii (after Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014).

The mapping of genders and deriflections in Figure 4 shows a nearly perfect split between animate and inanimate nouns. Inanimate nouns typically exhibit a one-to-one mapping that coincides with the observed alliterative agreement.

As for animate nouns, a simplification seems foreseeable whereby gender II merges with gender I, resulting in a single 'human' gender (cf. Nichols 2019: 86). In addition, there are two genders with multiple deriflection classes: the 'human' gender I is coupled with three deriflections exhibiting NF class *BA-* in the plural; similarly, the gender for animals and loan words (gender III) also pairs with three deriflections, albeit with NF class marker *I-* in the plural. Both gender I and gender III exhibit identical singular forms and near identical deriflection patterns. As the plural AGR classes of both genders differs only in terms of one target, it seems likely that the human versus animate distinction in the gender system is a later development.

3 Discussion

The gender and deriflection systems in Anii are complex yet robust. Even though the NF class prefixes and AGR exponents are occasionally omitted in fast speech, speakers are nevertheless aware of them and use them consistently in careful speech. This observation is true for all age groups. Slight variation is remarked across speakers in how the deriflection/genders systems are used, e.g. the alternation between *GA-/BU-* and *GA-/I-*. We shall have to await and see whether this is symptomatic of a generalization of NF *I-* and gender *i-* for inanimate nouns in the plural (as seems to already be the case in the gender system). It is also possible that it reflects a dialectal peculiarity that is manifested for only some nouns in the Bassila speech community but which occurs more frequently in other dialects.

When comparing the gender and deriflection system, one can observe that the latter is more complex than the former (cf. Güldemann and Fiedler 2019, this volume) who already observed that the deriflection system in Niger-Congo languages is often more conservative). In Anii, there is a greater number of deriflection classes partly due to a greater number of NF classes. In the singular, the *Ø*-class, and in the plural the *A-* class are found only in the NF class system but not in the AGR class system, offering more pairing opportunities. The agreement system in Anii also seems to have undergone more drastic changes, at least as far as the plural forms are concerned. Firstly, a plural agreement in *a-* does not exist. Secondly, the split of an (original) AGR class with *ba-* as the main exponent into two agreement classes, differentiated merely by the form of the focus particle, seems to be a later development caused by semantics. Therefore, in the plural paradigms of the Anii gender system, we can observe an emergent general tripartition into three groups

corresponding to the animacy hierarchy: human – animate – inanimate (borrowings treated as animate). This tripartition cannot be observed in the singular counterpart. Here, a two-way split exists between animates and inanimates.

As such, the semantics of the noun determine the agreement class. Animate nouns with singular NF classes *U-* and *A-* trigger agreement in *a-*, whereas inanimate nouns with the same nominal forms trigger agreement in *u-*. The questionable status of an exponent *U-* for indicating humans (even though optionally found for two agreement targets), is also confirmed by the observed derivation patterns. Agentive nouns and other derived persons always get NF class *A-* in the singular, never NF class *U-*. A similar pattern appears to hold true for Guang (Kwa, see Fiedler and Güldemann 2019) and Longuda (Adamawa, see Elstermann, Fiedler and Güldemann, this volume).

A general split into animates and inanimates is also observed in genitive constructions. These constructions follow the order Possessor – Genitive particle – Possessum. The form of the genitive particle depends on the animacy status of the possessor: for inanimates, the invariant form *ka* is used (cf. Zaske and Atti Kalam 2014: 53); for animates, *a* is used for singular nouns and *ba* for plural nouns, (22).

(22)

	POSSR	GEN[5]	POSSM	
AN.SG	*Faati*	*a*	*gu-faala*	'the commerce of Fati'
AN.SG	*à-sə̀ná*	*á*	*ʊ̀-dɔ̀*	'the neck of the dog'
AN.PL	*ɪ-tʊŋa ba-ɖe*	*ba*	*ʊ-ɖən*	'one of these guinea-fowls'
IAN	*bató*	*ká*	*ʊ-ga*	'the chef of the boat'

In summary, classification within the gender system appears to be highly motivated by semantic criteria, differentiating fundamentally between human, animate and inanimate nouns. The deriflection system, by contrast, exhibits no such motivational criteria, with the important exception of NF class *BA-* which is restricted to humans. This is indicative of the reorganization and simplification within the nominal classification system of Anii towards an opposition along the animacy cline.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow the Leipzig glossing rules, except the following:

AN	animate
C	consonant
EMPH	emphatic

5 The genitive marker assimilates with the vowel of the following noun which is not illustrated in these examples.

IAN	inanimate
IDEF	indefinite
N	nasal
NF	nominal form
NUM	numeral
PN	proper/place name
POSSM	possessum
POSSR	possessor
PRO	pronoun
TN	transnumeral
TP	terminal particle
V	vowel

Acknowledgments: Part of the data comes from fieldwork conducted in 2008 in Bassila in the frame of the CRC (SFB) 632 "Information structure" (2003–2015), funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) who have also generously financed the present research project (project number 338110259). I am especially indebted to Stefanie and Martin Zaske, as well as all Anii language consultants, for their help and support during my stay in Bassila and for later answering all my questions. I also thank Lee Pratchett and Gianna Marks for English proofreading, as well as Tom Güldemann and an anonymous reviewer for their comments and suggestions that helped to improve the paper.

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